

GIFTED & TALENTED

SUMMER 2020 | BRIEF 4

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

Students with gifts and talents perform – or have the capability to perform – at higher levels compared to others of the same age and experience. During the school year, teachers modify gifted learners’ educational experiences to meet their specific needs, but what happens during the summer? It can be difficult to know exactly how much and what kinds of activities a gifted student needs and wants during the summer break, but it is an important topic that should be discussed with gifted students and their families.

At the end of each school year, collaboration between schools and families of gifted learners helps ensure summer activities will support the retention of knowledge and increase [social emotional learning](#) to meet each child’s specific needs. Whatever the specific details of these individual plans, it is important for parents and educators to help children keep an eye on the future, since before they know it, the summer will be over and a new school year will begin.

WHY IT MATTERS

While rest and relaxation are important, research suggests that students who participate in summer learning activities score higher on fall achievement tests than those left to their own devices. Summertime offers the exciting prospect of engaging gifted children at a more relaxed pace and with a greater diversity of offerings or depth than the school year usually allows. Effective summer learning for gifted students combines content with creativity, critical thinking and real-world experiences.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

When planning for summer learning of gifted students, it's helpful when:

- Parents and teachers connect to share ideas and resources on summer strategies for their high-ability students.
- Involve the student and ask what they want to learn.
- A child's intellectual, social and emotional needs are considered, along with their interests and passions.
- Teachers suggest projects, assignments and activities that focus on one area of growth to prepare for the coming year.
- Find activities and opportunities that motivate the students to want to keep learning throughout the summer.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Teachers, how can reflecting on the school year, both good and the bad, provide a strong foundation for goal-setting, and in turn, help develop a student's self-efficacy during the summer?
- Families, have you sat down with your child to set goals for summer learning and how you both envision summer break?
- How will you use the summer break to talk about longer-term goals during a time when your child is more relaxed?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

Parents of gifted children play a powerful role in expanding their world and helping them pursue learning opportunities centered around what they love. When outside experiences and adventures are limited during the summer, families need to look no further than their own home to provide rich learning environments for their gifted students. Use the times indoors to be swept away in some new adventure or explore a new curiosity. Learning happens most when moments happen that make children feel excited, awed, fascinated and even amused by experiences that vividly stand out in their mind.

For some children, including English learners (ELs), home is a doorway back to a familiar world –adorned with comforting cooking smells, richly colored fabrics, wall hangings and photographs from their native countries.

